MANUFACTURING EXTENSION PARTNERSHIP Success Stories from the Field

Purity Kitchen

Nebraska Manufacturing Extension Partnership

Purity Kitchen - Making it Easy to Eat Healthy

Client Profile:

Purity Seeds LLC is engaged in manufacturing and marketing baking mixes made from flax seeds as well as packaged whole and ground flax seed. The baking mixes are currently sold in grocery and gift stores across North and South Dakota under the Purity Kitchen brand. The family-owned company employs 10 people at its facility in Raymond, South Dakota.

Situation:

Wanda and Gene Bethke, owners of Purity Kitchen, have enjoyed success raising commodity crops such as corn, wheat, rye, millet, sunflower, and beans on their South Dakota farm which has been owned and operated by the Bethke family since the 1930s. After investigating the many health benefits of the crop, the pair decided to expand into golden flax production. In 2006 they began growing, processing and selling flax seed in addition to their other crops and have 80 to 120 acres devoted to flax production. The Bethkes began selling their flax through craft fairs, farmers markets, and online. Wanda noticed many of her customers were interested in ways to incorporate flax seed into their diet without baking from scratch. With this in mind, she realized they could make further use of the product by selling healthy baking mixes made with flax. Initially, Wanda conducted her own research and development, creating her own recipes for family and friends. Interested in learning more about starting a food business, Wanda attended a 'From Recipe to Reality' seminar, a component of the nationally recognized Food Entrepreneur Assistance Program (FEAP), part of the Nebraska Manufacturing Extension Partnership (Nebraska MEP), a NIST MEP network affiliate -University of Nebraska-Lincoln's Food Processing Center. The seminar's intent is to give a realistic overview of all the issues involved in starting a food business with topics including market research, product development, pricing, food safety, and legal concerns.

Solution:

Wanda subsequently entered Phase 2 of the FEAP program, under the direction of FEAP's technical services manager, Bethany Jackson. Phase 2, titled 'From Product to Profit', consists of tailored, one-on-one assistance provided by a team of technical and business development specialists at The Nebraska MEP - Food Processing Center. Types of assistance given to Purity Seeds included labeling review and print-ready proof, product development, promotional assistance, and price determination. Jackson provided nutritional labeling for Wanda's products. Nutritional labeling is the process of analyzing a client's product to determine the nutrient content and inputting the data into a nutrition facts panel as required by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). These services are part of The Food Processing Center's comprehensive label review service to insure a product's compliance with all FDA packaging regulations. With the benefit of a professional's understanding of regulations involved, the elements addressed with this service include ingredient statements, nutrition panel type sizes, formats, and the placement of required text elements on the label. Bethany also provided product development assistance. Though Wanda's product was almost perfected, Bethany helped to



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convert the formula and process to industrial form; thereby allowing for scaled-up production. She also assisted in sourcing wholesale ingredients for the final product formulation and in finding a contract manufacturer for large-scale production of Wanda's product. Nebraska MEP provided assistance in creating promotional materials, including development of a sales letter, press release, and the product specifications sheet, to be included in the company's publicity brochure.

Results:

- * Increased sales by \$12,000.
- * Invested \$225,000 in production facility.
- * Projected creation of 3 jobs.

Testimonial:

"Nebraska MEP's entrepreneur seminar was an excellent seminar highlighting every step of starting a food business to the marketing of the product. I was impressed that they presented a very realistic scenario of operating a food business. They stressed the importance of business plans and knowing the competition of the product you were developing. With the many food products on the shelf, it is tough to get a new one started so (you) need to know how to make yours stand out."

Wanda Bethke, Owner

